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A NORMAN-FRENCH PEDIGREE,

HELSBY OF HELSBY,

CO. LANCASTER,

BY THOMAS HELSBY,

BARRISTER AT-LAW.

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A NORMAN-FRENCH PEDIGREE.

BY THOMAS HELSBY, ESQ., OF LINCOLN'S INN.

THE accompanying pedigree is a copy of an ancient illuminated Roll of about the reign of Edw. IV., and written throughout in Norman-French, perhaps one of the most unique and earliest specimens of genealogical art that has survived, almost uninjured, to modern times. It relates to the family of Hellesby or Helsby in Cheshire, which from the reign of Richard Cœur de Lion to that of Edw. II. held the three manors of Helsby, Chorlton, and Acton-in-Delamere, and many other lands in the county of Chester, when on the death of Sir William de Hellesby, Knt., a Crusader, and tenant *in capite* to Edw. II., the manors and lands fell to his five coheiresses. The manor of Acton, however, which was held by feudal or military service from the Abbey of Vale Royal in Delamere Forest, had previously descended from Sir Jocelyne de Hellesby, Knt., a Crusader with Cœur de Lion, and the patriarch of the family, to his second son, Lord Adam de Hellesby, whose grandson, Lord Ranulph de Acton, would seem to have acquired the name of his manor, and, in fact, adopted a coat of arms entirely different to his paternal coat. The sole daughter and heir of Ranulph was My Lady Maude de Acton, who carried this manor and other Cheshire lands to her husband and third cousin, Lord Adam de Hellesby, the second brother of Sir William, the father of Sir William the Crusader. It then appears that Adam de Hellesby exchanged Acton with his nephew, the latter Sir William, for lands in Helsby and Chorlton, and these, with lands he held in Acton, Bacford, and other places, by grant from his father and elder brother, descended to his son, Sir Richard de Hellesby, Knt., and his posterity, the chief Manor of Helsby, in the meantime, going in equal moieties to the heirs of Sir William the Crusader, the Beestons of Beeston in Cheshire, and the Traffords of Trafford in Lancashire. For a minuter history, however, I shall reserve my pen until the publication of another and very long vellum Roll of Charles the First's time, mentioned at the end of this paper, and which appears to have been substituted for the present smaller one. The latter measures about twelve feet, and is eight inches in breadth, on fine vellum, fastened together by rough twisted vellum thongs; it is worn and eaten a little here and there, but well preserved, even to the strong dark-brown of the writing. A shield of ten quarterings (carefully engraved on Plate XXX.), is emblazoned with its curiously cut mantle, and the motto, "Eu dieu est mon esperance," at the head of the pedigree; above these quarterings being four heater-shaped shields respectively charged with the arms of 1. Helsby, 2. Hatton, 3. Acton, and 4. Cholmondeley. Unlike the generality of pedigrees, the names of each descent, in lieu of the circle, is contained in a folding label or square, with half-open gilded sides, like a book, and several names are sometimes crowded into one square; immediately below, and adjoining, come the heater shields and their impalements; a few triangular banners are scattered up and down, whilst up the main line of the descent spread the green stem and

branches of an oak, with its gilded fruit and verdant leaves of the same notchy shape as we see them in our day, having its root in the centre, apparently, of the Manor of Helsby—a hill being drawn, crowned with a castle, on the one side, and the village on the other, which includes a representation of the Hall or Moat-House. The descent ends with Ranulph Fitz Hugh, and his cousin Richard Fitz William, who were married in Edward Fourth's time, and with some of their brothers and sisters, children and grandchildren, who were certainly living in Henry Eighth's time. At this point several additions have been made, and two generations added in two different hands, the latest being, apparently, of the time of Jac. I or Car. I. Immediately following the additions is an emblazoned shield of sixteen quarterings of the coats of 1. Helsby, 2. Stanley, 3. Bamville, 4. Sylvester, 5. Stourton, 6. Hooton, 7. Leftwich, 8. Haughton, 9. Grosvenor, 10. Mobberley, 11. Downes, 12. Pulford, 13. Harrington, 14. Flemyngh, 15. Cancefield, and 16. Helsby. From this point downwards follow a series of heater shields slung by belts on the branches of the oak, the centre of the oak being occupied with square shields of quarterings of the female lines. My opinion is however, that this latter part, which is some five feet in length, formed no part, originally, of the pedigree, but was added in the reign of Elizabeth, and my reasons for so thinking are, first, that the original pedigree was brought down to the reign in which it was written, the handwriting being clearly of about Edw. 4th's time, and terminated with the last-mentioned Ranulph and Richard. My grandfather, who was something of an antiquary, had, I believe, an opinion that a portion of the Roll had been lost, which brought the descent down originally a generation or two lower, but that could not be, since on the same skin of vellum, with which the descent ends, room was left for two more generations, and besides, the style of caligraphy is altogether against such a supposition; the vellum also is somewhat fresher, such as might have been added a century later; and again, the quarterings of Stanley (the daughter of a younger son of Hooton), did not come in before 1570; and lastly, I think I can show the very interesting fact that this was a pedigree drawn and engrossed simply for the purpose of some law suit, by a Friar of the neighbouring Priory of Norton, for, on turning to the back of the last of, what I assume to be, the only original skins, is found written in a rather large and plain hand—"Hec est geneologie exhib in Cure dñi Regis apud Westmonast' die mercur' x. post fest' Assump' bē marie virgin Anno regnō Henr' Reg' sep a Conquestū ij.—Ex' per Ric' Pole." There is some little ambiguity as to whether the date refers to the time the Roll was produced in Court, or to when the endorsement was made, but in any case these facts do not militate against the hypothesis of the writing being in existence many years before the 2. Hen. 7. I think it highly probable that it had been executed for and used in a former suit, which, indeed, may have been the very identical suit, which was evidently in, if not before the Court, in the 2nd year of the reign of Henry 7., and there is some strength in this opinion when we consider that this was a very disturbed period, and no doubt law-suits of the simplest kind drew

their slow length along for years and years, even from Edw. 4th's days to and throughout Hen. 7th's. About a hundred to one hundred and fifty years later, however, another suit, or intended suit, appears to have turned up, which may further illustrate my argument. This was a suit or rather an action at law that Randle, the son of Ranulph Fitz Hugh was apparently intending to bring or defend, previous to which he took counsels' opinion. Both case and opinion are written on a sheet of foolscap, and as it is of great interest, particularly to lawyers, as much from the name of the Counsel engaged as from the nature of the subject, and the manner of drawing up the case, I give the following copy:—

16 May 1606.

A Breiffe vewe of the effect of certane Evidences towchinge helsby & other lands & hereditaments in Chesshyre belonginge to Randle helsby of the Mote howse gentlⁿ & of other matters whereby it may appeare what right & Interest he hath or ought to have in the Marsh Wasts & Comons fisherie & of hereditaments of helsby, viz—

Without date
tempore
Ric. 1. or John
A.

Syr Jocelyne Lord of hellesby knyght giveth vnto Richarde sone to Syr John de hellesby knt. his sonne totam terra mea in villa de Hellesby sc̄lt que vocat' Mares Ley incipiendo &c. cu com pastur' et oib^s coimb^s aisiamenti &c. Habend &c. in aquis viis et in semitis in viuarriis et in molendinis &c. Reddend, inde annuatim mihi et hered meis vnam sagittam ad fest S. Johan Baptist &c.

Without date
Hen. 3.
B.

Syr John de hellesby knt doth geve to Ric his sonne totam terr mea in Hellesby sc̄lt que vocat' Motelaghe &c. salvo mⁱ et heredib^s mei acqua de llewellynes broke &c. Tenend de me, et h. ms &c.

Note thatt Maresley called att this day Marley is nigh the River Meresey & thatt the Water of llewellynes broke is the boundarie betwixt helsby & ffordsham & ye Motelagh is p'cell of helsby halles or as called tyme out of mynl the Mote house & vpon wch broke ther was in auntiente tymes a milne within Helsby belonging y^e Lords thereof.

12 Ed. 1. Ed.
C.
S.

Sir Willm de Hellesby knt then Lord of Helsby & heyre to Sir Willm Lord de hellesby his father the sonne & heire to Alan Lord of hellesbie ducenti acras terr eu edificis in villa de hellesbie &c. cu oib^s pertinencijs &c. in bosco, in plano in pratis in pascuis in moris in mariscis in turbarijs molendinis in acquis in stagnis in viis in semitis in servitio liberorum hominum in hominibus et natives &c. reddend vna rosa &c.

Note thatt this rent is nott paid att this day. An auncient Rental doth make mencōn of this rent. The half pt of this land att this daie belongeth vnto John Savage and ye reste therof to Mr. helsby with whose demenes of helsby ye same is occupied. The said Mr. Helsby descendeth from ye foresaid Adam de hellesby as appereth by diuers evidences wch are now wrought jn a pedigree wch shall be delivered vnto you speedily.

3 R. 2.

Adam de Hellesby sonne of Alan doth geve to Syr Bertram de hellesby his younger sone septe acr & terre mee de novo approviamento in villa de Hellesby pene ad tota vita sue &c., reddend vna' saggit' &c.

2 R. 2.
D.
S.

Sir Richard de hellesby knt. sonne and heyre of Adam geve to Peres de trayffurd et Mawde sorore mee vnu' camp et mesuagi' que vocat' Brukaker &c. infra his divisus &c. vsqz. ad medin' de streme de llewellyne &c., et cu coim pastur' ad oiu averia sua et hoc m moris, &c.

This land is knowne to this day & is nowe called Troffordesaker & was of late purchased by Sr John Savage of Rockesavage knt, the rent is lost but there yeldeth also a rent servisse of a day sheringe in harvest. There is lykewise aneother dede from Adam to Syr Reginalde de hellesby knt. another sonne butt the copie is not now to be founde.

11 Hen. 4.

Johes de Hellesby & Lucye his wyffe soror Johan sauvage de

Clyffetone ded release &c. Will Venables de Doneham Massey totū ius nrm et clamū qd, &c., in illis terris et vastis cū ptinent qd p'deus Will pēt ex dono feffamento Rādi de hellesby pater me fil Ric' dc hellesby milit' katherine vx' p'dei Rādi Thoma de hellesby milit frat' p'dei Rādi Will dc hellesby clerc' Edward Vernou et Angillyn vx eius soror' p'dei Rādi in Villa de hellesby Habend, &c., Will Venables inde confe- pleins &c. to the vses conteyned in another dede &c.

This was a grete portion butt not all helsby lands helde by John de hellesby. Willm Venables Baron of Dunham M. geve the seizim thereof to Willm de Beestone who held land there as 'Lord of moytie of the Manour by right of his grete father his mother y^e Ladye Mawde y^e doghther & coheye of Sir Peers de thornetone knt & his wyfpe the Ladye Lucy de hellesby doghther & coheir to S^r Willm the cozyn of y^e aforesayde S^r Ryehd. the grete father of the sayde Jōhn fil Radi.

13. Hen. VI.
E.
S.

Johes de Hellesbe & Randolph de hellesbe his sonne & heire apparent doth geve to John le Tayleur Ryc' le burges John le Smythe & others et heredib^s &c. dua bouvate terre in helesbe vocat', &c., Tenend, &c., cu comun pastur', &c., reddend x^d.

This land is called the Taylors at this day & was of late the inheritaunce of one Alcs Taylor deceased who paid no rent: The same is now y^e land of Thomas helsby gent' elder sonne & heire apparent of Mr. helsby who purchased y^e same & settled it with o^r lan le, when hee married the daughter of Mr. Rotter of kyngesley halles Esqr.

10. Ed. IV.
F.
S.

Willms Hellesby of Hellesby Esqr. doth geve to Hugh hellesby of Chester gent' his brother & Mabell Starkey his wyfe et heredibz, &c., oma terr'mee in villa hellesby—scilicet vocat' Ladyes Walke &c. quod Johan Pecoke quādm tenuit de dñna Lucy hellsby avia me & ex dono feffamento Rādi hellesby of hellesby Esq. pater me &c., cu' coī pastur' oib^s averijis, &c.

1. Ed. 5.
F.

Willms Hellesby of hellesby Esqr. doth geve to Johān Vernon de haslyngton Esq., &c., omnia terras &c. cu' coī pastur' &c. in' Actone &c. to vscs conteyned in an other dede.

These pecs of Evidences I rec' of the heres of Mr. Vernons ffefees viz., Sir Hugh Beeseton of Beeseton kny y^e present ffefee in trusste (& must have them redeliverd vnto him) &c. w^{ch} doe im.... lands & comons in y^e possession of Mr. Helsby.

M^d that the said Mr. Helsby hath gotten in his time ypon the wasts in Helsby stones for his milne, digged sodds for brickkynes &c. gotten sande, & his tenents have digged & soe doe vpon the wasts Turffs sodds &c. without contradiction, & have taken in some pts of the wasts & enclosed them. &c.

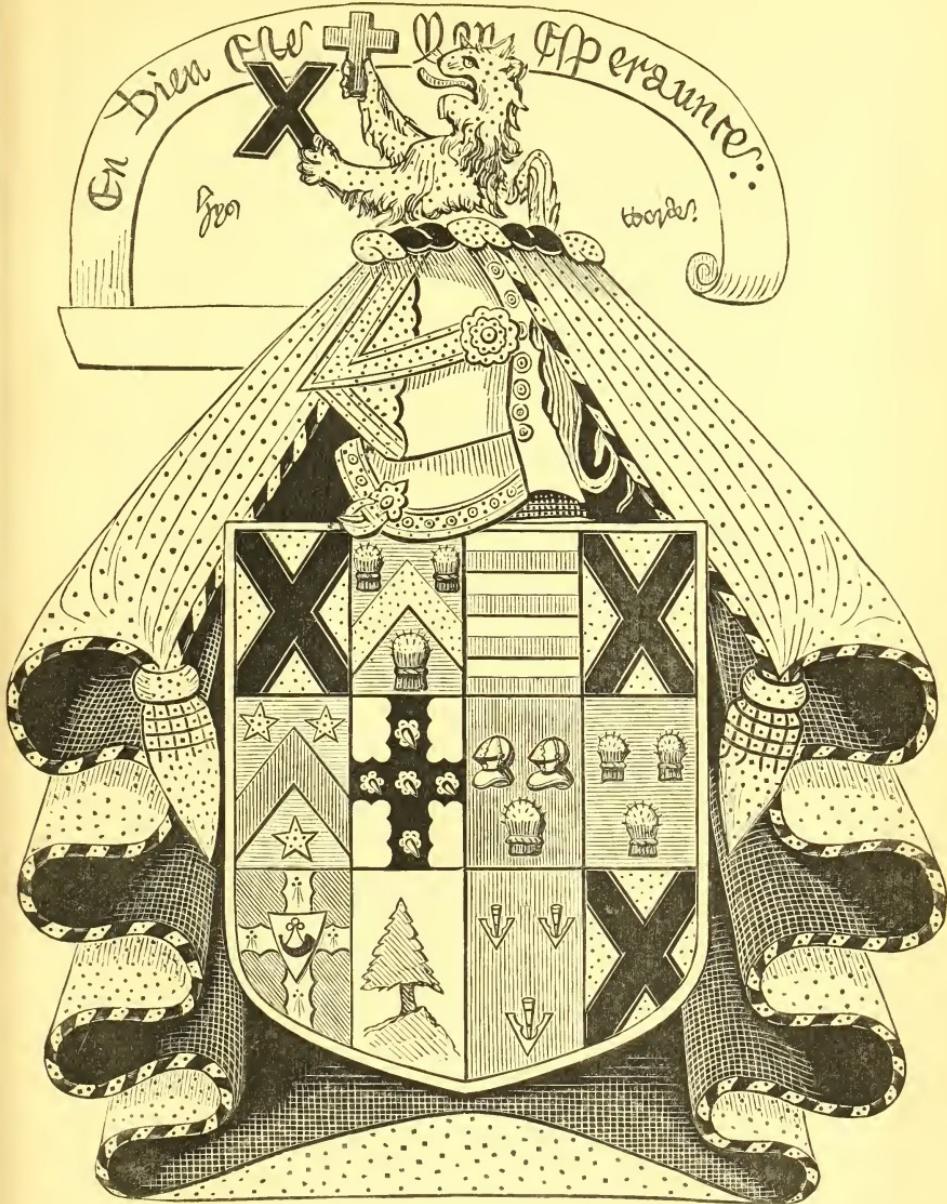
I have Advisedly pervsed theise Copyes & In my opinio they do veri plainly Argue that the Auncester of Mr. hellesby had An In'erest in the wasts of helsby & that especially by these fore wh^e are noted in the margent by this mark S. & especially by the first second & third the first being a grant of 200 acres of land, the second of a feild & house, & the third And most materiall in my mind being A grant of 2 bouuates which being so late as 13. hen. 6 argueth when taken with the first An estate in the grantee in the soyle of the same comonable lands.

Nevertheless, I do not hence perceine wh part of the wasts hath ben claemed or doth belong by these deeds or eni deeds nor that there hath been use or profit Injoyed for Any portioⁿ And in Case of speciall pleading it will bee very difficult to plead the title to the soyle.

ffor better Ifor'mation wherin It were conuenient to serch the Records of the tower And as I think those would declare who of Auncient time was or were lords of that toune or manor before Sir Jocelyne of Hellesby And if lat portion of the wastes & fishery were then part of the said manor or of firodsham.

HUMFRAY DAUENPORT

17 may 1606.



Arms of Helsby, of Helsby, Co. Lancaster.

- | | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| 1. Hellesby, of Hellesey. | 7. Cholmondeley, of Cholmondeley. |
| 2. Hatton, of Hatton. | 8. Blundebille, Earl Palatine of Chester. |
| 3. Crisppyn, of Normandy. | 9. Kingsley, of Kingsley, Hereditary
Chief Forester of Delamere. |
| 4. Hellesey, of Acton in Delamere. | 10. Sylvester, of Stonerton. |
| 5. Acton, of Acton. | 11. Malpass, of Malpass. |
| 6. Frodsham, of Frodsham. | 12. Hellesey, or Helsby. |

This was the style of a Counsellor's opinion in that day, and it is remarkable how little, in form, it is removed from the present—the moderns usually commencing "I have perused" &c., "and am of opinion" &c.—proving how purely conservative are the lawyers. Certainly they are the least destructive of all mankind, as the bundles of apparently useless, dirty, mouldy papers in their chambers and offices so strongly attest. Besides, no race ever reverenced half so much their great predecessors, whom they called up to a recent date "sages of the law," and to whose decisions, from learned and hoary Glanville, Bracton, and Fleta, revered Fitzherbert, and honored Littleton, they bow with humility and affection even to this day. It is to be regretted that all these abstracts of charters were not fully set out in the case, or brief, as the Attorneys called it in those times, but I have one or two of the originals in my possession, also a letter of Sir Humphrey Davenport's, which I regret, however, at present I cannot find, for I am under the impression that it relates entirely to this case, but, what is more interesting, mentions the fact of the pedigree here described being the identical pedigree laid before him, and which has no doubt done other legal duty, for a somewhat amusing letter of 1666, from a Richard ffrost, apparently an Attorney of Chester, indicates the beginning of more law, but this time on the equitable side of the dreadful machine of justice. These, however, I hope to give on some future occasion, but I may include in this article the copy of an ancient and somewhat picturesque description of the principal boundaries of Helsby and Frodsham.

A NOTE OF THE BORDARIES OF THE WASTE LANDE BETWIXTE THE LORDE OF FFRODSHAM AND HELESBIE.

"And for ffrodesham to begin at haspellwell to ffynchehille and be following a little the brook called llewelyns brooke straight along to a gate called the door gappe which brooke is turned another way by a new gutter or dich and then down a stonie waie to Calverscroft and then running on the lefte hand to the Ringyarde of Helsbie leading along to the same ringyarde to Heymore or Wallsmore and following the same Ringyarde to a lane called the Rake but interrupted by Helsbye mere by reason of a p'cell of land called the 5. Butts and then by following the same Ringyarde to Hapsforde brooke.

"The bondaries of Helesby to begin at a certaine marke fixed att llewlyns brooke being the p'ticon between ffrodesham Alvanley and helsbie at the end of an old dych and then followinge a littel of the same brooke where in antient tyme the Crosse and banner hath byne receaved in the midst of the same brooke by ffrodsham men at a meese between the lordshyps and possescon hath been receuined in their p'ambulacon and then along the same brooke to Dane mere lane and where in former tyme the bakers of Weste chester hath sold bread unto the neighbours thereaboute, they Chester bakers might not sell any within the liberties of ffrodesham, and so still followinge the said brooke in closinge forthe the tenements of Helesby the seuerall p'cells of land called Lee moores or Washmore by the borders of frodsham march, Ince marsh, Eltone march, Hapsforde more, allsoe that they saith the

same long agoe hath byn carried to Helsby burne, alsoe the said brooke hath formerly runne another waie, that is to say down a p'ce of land called the Rydges and not where it doth at this p'sente as the ffrodes-ham men affyrme.

“ Mem—that the said helsbye burne is nigh Maister Randle helsbie his howse and passeth by an antiente orcharde of trees app'tenant thereof.”

This description would be written about the end of Queen Elizabeth's reign.

Helsby Mere probably means Helsby moore or marsh, on the banks of the broad river Mersey, and Helsby burn is, I think, wholly forgotten ; at all events some years ago I made enquiries about it in vain. Neither it nor Maister Randle Helsbie's howse are to be found *temp. Victoria.* The latter, called indifferently Helsby Hall or the Moat House, was greatly damaged by fire about the reign of Car. I. and wholly destroyed the beginning of the last century, when the remains of the first conflagration were occupied as a farm house. A rude stone carving of the arms quarterly with Hatton is the only stone left, and this, I believe, was picked up years after the last fire, and had probably adorned some chimney-piece, for it was gilded and colored. Not a soul, as far as I can learn, has any tradition of the old habitation, but the plough may some day turn up its site. The Cross and Banner above referred to consisted, according to tradition, of the Helsby Banner, that is, a yellow silk, bearing St. Andrew's Cross (a Saltier) sable, and this I have heard used to be exchanged for the Frodsham Banner, a white silk, bearing an engrailed Cross (charged with five stars) sable. The name Helsby was, I have no doubt, given by the Danes in early Saxon times to the Township, which is very picturesque and romantic looking, and it is not improbable that “Dane Mere Lane” took its name from those rough old sea-kings. I think thirteen counties may be seen from Helsby Tor, the old village nestles at its feet, and a two mile walk through the Manor brings you to the wide-spreading Mersey, on the banks of which, a little higher up, once stood lonely Stanlawe, the mother of Whalley Abbey.

To return, however, to Davenport's old case. It will be observed that a Mill belonged at that date to Randle Helsby, and either the same, or another, is referred to in the first Note. I think it probable that the one on Llewellyns Brook was in very early times an old Water Mill, and is simply mentioned in this note to shew more fully the rights of the ancient lords, and that Mr. Helsby's was a Wind Mill. At this day, however, neither Wind, Water Mill, or even Llewellyn's Brook is to be found, but there is a Wind Mill in Hapsford, situate just within the eastern boundary line of the latter township and the township of Helsby, which may have replaced the ancient Helsby Wind Mill. The brook no longer bears its old name, but it flows (if not as wide deep and strong perhaps as of old) as the eastern boundary of Helsby from Frodsham, and other townships. I think it most probable that its name came from the last Welsh Prince, for two reasons, one being that the daughter of Llewellyn, Prince of Wales, was wife of the last of the reigning Earls Palatine of Chester, and

whom she is reported to have poisoned ; the other reason being that on the forfeiture of the Manor and Lordship of Frodsham by Robert de Frodsham, for slaying some favorite Lord of the King (John), it was granted by Edw. I., in 1279, to David brother of the Prince of Wales, but he being attainted of High Treason in the same year, it was again forfeited to the crown, and among the Inquisitors appointed on that occasion was Richard de Hellesby, the Richard Fitz-John of this pedigree, and Randle de Acton his cousin, and it is not a little singular that, if my supposition should be right, a closer Welsh connection existed at about this time, for Adam Fitz Alan de Hellesby is *temp. Ric. 2*, or thereabouts, found giving lands to the Chester Abbey as follows — “Ad de Hellesby de terra in Chorleton (Gilberto cognato suo fil. Walei p’c de Frodesham.” Who is the father of Gilbert (the kinsman of Adam de Hellesby) here described as *Walei*, the prince, or chief (?) of Frodsham ? The latter place it must be remembered was important ; it had its castle (burnt down *temp. Car. 2.*) Helsby stood between it and Chester, and on Helsby Hill stood high in the air a castle, which would however be a minor defence to Beeston and Chester against the ravages of the Welsh. The christian name of Edward Vernon mentioned in the case does not appear in any pedigree, and the Charter of 2 Hen. IV. must have been entirely overlooked from first to last, or very slovenly perused, as also must that of 10 Edw. IV., which states Hugh Hellesby to be of Chester. I have seen in an ancient Charter a piece of wood-land called the Ladye Beatrix’s Walk or Bower, and I have no doubt it refers to Beatrix de Hatton, the wife of Alan de Hellesby, and is the same spot referred to in the Charter of 10. Edw. IV. as the Ladys Walke.

The note to the Charter of 12. Edw. fil. Ed. referring to the pedigree, without doubt alluded to this French one, which, as before remarked, is mentioned in Davenport’s letter. This note shews, I think, the care with which it was then treasured, and doubtless some friend travelling London-wards, or even a special Messenger, would carry it to the Temple, where Sir Humphrey Davenport’s chambers were situated. Sir Humphrey was a son of the house of Davenport, of Davenport, or one of its younger houses, and was appointed a Judge of the King’s Bench or Common Pleas, I think *temp. Jac. I.*

Finally, I am under the impression that this old pedigree descended to John Helsby, the eldest son and co-heir of Thomas *temp. Car. I.*, and was afterwards recovered from this John’s son or grandson by John Helsby, of Kingsley Hall, Cheshire, the grandson of Thomas, and that in consequence of the former circumstance a large, new, and more elaborate pedigree (containing numerous copies of Charters) was prepared for Randolph, the second son and co-heir of Thomas, by a Herald Painter in Chester, and which bears date 1645, and which has been printed with great exactitude in Dr. Howard’s “ *Miscellanea Genealogica*” (together with a *fac-simile* engraving of the large shield of quarterings emblazoned at its head), and a copy of which, in English, with a minute description, some time ago given by the Rosicrucian Society, will appear in some future number of the “ *RELIQUARY*. ”

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